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Twenty Five

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TWENTY-FIVE

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By

ELMER ALLEN BESS

and

EMMA CAUGHEY BESS

If such diverse, and wholly human folk,
Could live together, married, yet in love,
For full one-fourth a hundred sturdy years,
And love each other more each wedding day,
And gain a sweeter happiness to boot—
Then hope can rest, close-winged, above each home,
And each long marriage can be tinged with peace.

New York Chicago Toronto

Fleming H. Revell Company

London and Edinburgh

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PS3503
.E775T8
1917

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

JUL 11 1917

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No. 1.

To

THREE SONS OF OUR BLOOD

TOGETHER WITH

MANY OTHER CHILDREN OF OUR LOVE

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. TWENTY-FIVE	11
Twenty-five	13
II. MAKING A HOME	17
Making a Home	19
Love's Vision	19
My Girl	20
Our Paradise	21
Through Thick and Thin	22
The Tints of Shadow	22
Our Little Foreigner	23
Hello!	24
The Silence of Friends	26
Just that Word	27
Jealousy	29
Love's Message	30
Experience	31
Keep Sweet!	31
One Thing a Woman Likes	33
Our Adopted Children	34
If This is Love	35
Appreciation	35
Together	36
Our Christmas Home	36
The Spices of Life	37

PAGE

Youth 38
The Folks we Know 38
Mistakes 39
Thrice-Told Tales 40
Too Good to be True 41
Solid Comfort 41

III. When the World Calls 45
When the World Calls 47
Somewhere 48
Compensation 49
The Price of Happiness 49
Scraps 50
If We Could Whistle 51
If We Dare 53
The War on Worry 54
God of the Common Things 54
If We Could 55
Things We Might Have Done 56
The Victory of Peace 57
Our House on the Shore 57
Trust 58

IV. Playing Together 59
Playing Together 61
Along the Road 62
Just as Well Laugh 62
The World We Live In 63
Music 65
The Path Across the Lake 66
Our Quest 68

PAGE

V. WISHING TOGETHER 69
A Little Wish 71
Still Building Castles 72
The Thoughtless Crowd 73
Stumblers 73
We Want the Best 74
God Bless You 75
Dreaming and Waking 76
When We Grow Old 77
Semper Fidelis 78
God Bless Us Both 79

Two people who have sought
together for twenty-five years
that "Foot-path of Peace,"
called Happiness,
who have felt the fragrance
of the "Blue-Flower"
in the darkness,
and have seen it blossom
in the sunshine of love;
who, listening intently,
have heard the Blue-bird
strains of sweetness,
these two would place
their spray of blue-flower
where other lives might, perchance,
catch its fragrance,—
hoping that here and there,
a heart out of tune
might hear a blue-bird strain
and look up, and laugh, and live, and love anew.

I

Twenty-five

TWENTY-FIVE

I

We married young.
That one year out was like two fools at sea.
The stars went out;
The crew rebelled;
The ship of marriage floundered on.
Our calms are scarcely sweeter now,
But last awhile.

The first one-fifth of twenty-five,
Our years were full of work,
School days, and keeping house,—
And keeping peace,—
Yet happy years.

II

The next few years were used to find ourselves,
In work, or marriage, faith, or love.
Our aims became more clear;
We saw the world had much it needed done;
Our ministry to human lives began to gain
The full compassion of our hearts.
The sacred fires of wider friendships glowed,
And those sweet secrets fellow workers told,
Of fine ambitions, splendid projects planned,
Became ourselves far more than then we knew.

That was the time of setting off for goals,
Of making out the course our lives should take.
Though crudely stated then, our visions held;
Those principles were used in our career,
Through work, or marriage, faith, or love.

III

Then came the testing years.
Our children's death wrought deep our faith,
And taught us how to love.
Our love for strangers, for our friends, and for
ourselves,
Extended into sympathy.

We knew the strength of pain;
We felt work's mighty force.
And yet the world went on,
Dark days and bright days,
With life inviting all our powers.

Those keen long years we blended thoughts,
And learned to take each other's tasks.
Our cause the same we worked as one;
The world believed us one.
Our common sorrows, needs, and work,
Cemented marriage more than rites.

Through battles where our work demanded both,
Our spirits struggled, one against the other one,
As he who strives against himself to live.
Those were the testing years.

IV

The group of years with faith the theme,
A going on by laws defined,
Developed larger poise in marriage or in work.
We saw our goals in nearer reach;
We realized our weaknesses or strength,
And past achievements failed to satisfy.
Our world contained a wealth of unrelated
truths,
Through which we groped to find our way.

We knew we loved with ever wiser trust,
We knew our projects steadily progressed;
Yet, ever thus, we felt our mission failed,
Since we, in work, or marriage, faith, or love,
To reach our zenith aims, must upward mount,
Expand, achieve, and strive to gain the best.
As eaglets in the nest, we felt the thorns
Of aspiration prodding still to fly.
We never wished for pure repose,
But feared we might.

V

Then came the Big Adventure years.
We saw the chance to take a greater task,
To serve our aims of life with better powers.
But custom bound us down;
The bread and butter laws were near;
Our comforts soothed.

We dared to talk it over, and to dream.
To give the most we had to life or love,
To serve our special world with strength unbound,
To enter boldly where we could not see,
To take the task our talents fitted best,
Our hearts proclaimed as right.

The risk was great.
Our work was known by other signs;
Ambition bade us keep the certain path.
To venture forth, to break with former plans,
Anon we knew we had to do,
Or let our faith decrease,
And let our love grow dull.

The world could offer more material gifts,
If we could gain our conscience' free consent,
To thrust aside the Big Adventure's call,
And hold to custom's path.

The mission of the open fields we sought,
As children search for blossoms in the spring.
With unrestraint we traveled blithely on;
With carols in our hearts our work was play.
We learned to be more free in love,
To let the other live in larger trust.

These Big Adventure years have brought us joy,
In work, or marriage, faith, or love.

II
Making a Home

MAKING A HOME

A home is made where hearts are kept in tune,
Where play, love, worship, work and life are free,
Where sons and daughters, or our friends, are
bound
By tender bands of love in one great cause,
Where parents live beside their youth in peace,
And all can play and work in one small house,
Where, miles apart, they sense their common ties,
And touch each other's life by mystic gifts.

And, through our life, we want to make a home,
Where love's fine ministries are strangely sweet
And much remembered through the fleeting years,
Where all who touch our lives and love may feel
A bit of longing when far, far away,
To get back home,—to get back home—again.

LOVE'S VISION

We build our house of life above the beach,
And, fearless, hear the ocean's distant roar.
We laugh to watch the breakers' hungry reach,
And send our light of love beyond the shore.

We have tried to keep alive and growing,—the great Red Rose of Love. It has needed tender

care. Sometimes the leaves drooped—here and there—reminding us that we were needing "His still dews of quietness" to make "our strivings cease." Our "Rosemary for remembrance" has taught us that thoughtfulness was the largest gift we could make to the foundation, superstructure, and crowning tower of our home-building.

MY GIRL

My girl is growing older,
Through many smiles and tears.
To me she's getting younger,
Despite the speeding years.

Her hair, once brown, is graying,
Young age is coming fast.
Long youth is gained by loving,—
For love, dear sirs, can last.

My girl and I may travel
Through valleys bleak and cold.
The end will find us younger,—
For love is never old.

We'll love as friends and playmates,
And seek the sunlit days,
We'll shun the irksome shadows,
And go congenial ways.

We'll pluck the fairest blossoms,
And seek the happy brooks,
We'll see the finest sunsets,
And find the sweetest nooks.

She's young because I love her,
Because she still loves me.
My wife and I are lovers,
And hope to ever be.

OUR PARADISE

Beside the sea we watched the crowding waves
The storm tossed high against the jutting rocks,
On which we lay in silence as we thought.
By city streets we watched the crowds that passed,
And studied how those surging people felt
And dreamed and planned and worked and hoped
and lived.
By life's broad fields we watched the workers toil
And rear their young to take the tasks they left,
That stronger hands might do them better yet.
Beside a street we watched our college youth
Pass in and out a house we called their home,
And leave for leadership among the crowds.

And watching these we watched each other, too,
And knew the Lord had made our Paradise
Where love can grow and work is keen.

THROUGH THICK AND THIN

Two youthful persons pledged their marriage troth,
With thoughts encircled by a single band.
They lived for twenty-five all-glorious years,
And ever loved with all-absorbing love.
They never once became engrossed with work,
Until they failed to do the little deeds
That graced and beautified their married life.
In all their strange career they never said
The thoughtless words that rankled later on.
They never spoke too suddenly to please,
Nor marred their trust by hint of jealousy.
Their tastes could be expressed in words the same,
Because they never disagreed in heart.
They never grinned and said, "I told you so!"

But they were never we,—
And they could never see a joke—
Nor love through thick and thin.

THE TINTS OF SHADOW

We prayed that love might blossom, true,
Amid the dancing light;
The tender tints we hoped to gain
Where life was free and bright.

We prayed for petals soft and mild,
The gift of sun and rain,
Then heard a voice within our souls,
"Such prayers are never vain."

We pondered what that voice could mean,
That spoke with accents clear,
But now we know the lessons taught
By shadows falling near.

Back there we did not understand
The mingling light and shade,
But now we see these tints in love,
Are tints the shadows made.

When sorrow's shadows touched our lives,
Our hearts were weak with pain,
But now we see love's beauty comes,
Through shadows, clouds, and rain.

OUR LITTLE FOREIGNER

There lives a boy where we reside,
Who speaks a language strange,
An English with a foreign tang,
And subject to a change.
His mother thinks she understands
His plan of building words,—
No other human creature knows,
Nor even little birds.

And yet he chatters all the day,
And goes about in glee,
And finds the eyes of foreign words
To make his English see.
We understand a word or two,
And then we drop a line,
While he is ever hunting words
To suit his chief design.

His English looks at us at times,
As though we ought to know
A friend of ours of former days,
When we began to grow.
But we would never slight a friend,
So blandly bow and smile,
And hope to know that stranger yet
When he has talked awhile.

HELLO!

I can see your brown eyes sparkle
With the light of love and joy,
As you stand beneath my window,
With the mischief of a boy,
And to neighbors passing by,
With a love-note in the cry,
Say, Hello! as they go.

I can hear your cheerful laughter,
As you find the salt to place
On the tails of singing robins,
And with bright, and eager face,
Throw your sesame on high,
Calling as the robins fly,
Sweet Hello! as they go.

I can watch your cordial welcome,
As you hail, across the street,
Just a stranger in the city,
Just a beast with weary feet,
And, be weather wet or dry,
With a strong and cheering cry,
Call, Hello! as they go!

But, my boy, I can but hear you
In my dreams of other days;
And, my heart is often lonely,
Where I walk in busy ways,
As I fail to hear you cry,
Though these years so swiftly fly,
That Hello! as I go.

From the Good Land you must hail me,
Where you wait beyond the skies,
With the love-note in your welcome,
And the love-glow in your eyes;
From your play-ground there on high,
As your father passes by,
Say, Hello! as I go.

THE SILENCE OF FRIENDS

We walk, my friend and I, at eventide.
The sun is resting where the shadows hide;
We watch the sands of night begin to run.
The earnest tasks of one more day are done,—
And silence reigns.

Our souls are blending into thoughts of one,
As night arises from the setting sun.
The lights and shades are mingled in our sky,
As tints of day in evening shadows lie,—
And silence reigns.

Our heart-beats mark the music of our peace.
Our tuneful silent songs our joys increase.
Our wordless speeches precious secrets tell,
We know the day has served us ill or well,—
Though silence reigns.

Those of us whose quest has been long and earnest, those of us who have called beseechingly as the whirring wings seemed to hover close to us,

are sure that oftenest the real fragrance of love has reached us—nearer to our vision have the gold-edged petals come—and closest were we to the harmony and symphony of the strains of Happiness we sought,—in the quiet hours of life, when there seemed no jars in unreached and, therefore, inharmonious chords, in the silence, when we seemed atune with all the world, and all the world in tune with God, when over and through and around us the peace of silence held sway.

JUST THAT WORD

Life glides on, serene and peaceful,
We converse in mellow tones,
Gestures move in graceful circles,
Love and reason mount their thrones.
Mirth and laughter rule the household,
Paradise is satisfied.
Tuneful concord! Flowing music!
Wait!

A word is said too quickly,
With a meaning half-concealed.
Glances quicken, lashes flutter,
Sleeping anger is revealed.
Words are sharpened, thoughts are
polished—

War—dread war—is then declared.
Keen-edged words, sarcastic phrases,
Cleave and pierce, with neither spared.

Sweet philosophy abandoned,
Love and reason roughly used,
War—black war—is loosened, rampant!
Strife alone has been amused.
Just that word with doubtful meaning,
Then a war, a bootless fate!
Peace again! But words remembered!
Scars are worn to Peter's Gate.

Slowly and painfully life's largest lessons are learned. We have stumbled often—as blindly we have studied the truth told us in the poem learned and loved in childhood's days. Truly have we found that "flying words" was not like "flying kites." Only after years of constant effort have we known the joy of the conquerors who could sometimes let "thoughts unexpressed fall back dead."

JEALOUSY

Devil-fish, thou million terrors
For the toilers of the sea,
Waiting in the darkest caverns,
With thy lambent serpents free—
Free to strike with subtle swiftness
Any living creature near,—
Thou art not the worst of foemen—
Jealousy is more to fear.

Though thy leather folds may strangle
Human flesh within thy toils,
Though the stoutest seaman trembles
And before thy cups recoils;
Though thy ligatures are fiendish,
As they twist and squeeze and tear,—
They are not the worst of torments,—
Jealousy is worse to bear.

With thy folds about a seaman,
And inflicting keenest pain,
Thou canst merely kill the body,
After that thou must refrain.
Jealousy can wreck the spirit,
Pierce with pain the human mind,
And with fiendish, growing passion,
Make the soul immortal blind.

LOVE'S MESSAGE

My name is Love, my manners plain,
A simple faith I own.
My heart and hands are free from stain;
I offer none a stone.

I travel every dusty road,
And am a friend of man.
I place my hands beneath the load,
And ease the weight I can.

I work while faith is full and strong
For those who need my life.
I sing for them my sweetest song,
Amid their griefs and strife.

I keep my heart from hatred free,
And patience rules my mind.
The men of toil possess in me
A friendship always kind.

Ye toiling, striving, weeping race,
Perplexed by doubt and fear,
Come, pause awhile before my place,
That I may give you cheer.

EXPERIENCE

We learned to get along together there,
And now—perhaps—we manage better still.
We feel the years—these twenty-five big years—
Should bring us much reward for having lived
And wrought out principles and mutual faith.

Together we have read the wisdom others wrote,
But gained from books much less than life itself.
The books have helped because we lived to learn;
Our friends assisted as we learned to live.

Experience taught the rarest laws we know,—
It taught to stop before the end of scraps.

KEEP SWEET!

When the day is dragging, dragging,
And your heart is sorely tried,
When your work is sadly lagging,
And ambition's end denied,
Keep sweet!
Hold your faith to constant hoping,
Never doubt amid your groping;
Keep sweet!

When your enemies assail you,
And your character impugn,
When your courage seems to fail you,
And your voice is out of tune,
Keep sweet!
Hold your hope to constant winging,
Never let your soul cease singing;
Keep sweet!

When you lose your friends' approval,
And the world is growing dark,
When you see the sure removal
Of your morning's only lark,
Keep sweet!
Hold your heart to constant cheering,
You can conquer naught by fearing,
Keep sweet!

If the sun of all creation
Shines through those of hopeful heart,
You will take a lofty station,
And, performing well your part,
Keep sweet!
You can make a dark world brighter,
You can make its burdens lighter,
Keep sweet!

Life holds so many rainy days—and weariness often prevents us from seeing the shining "silver lining" which we have been told lines every cloud. But through the years there has been a deep-rooting of that little bush of sweetbrier,—close to the door of our Heart's Garden,—that its fragrance, greater in the rain, than at any other time —might waft into every corner of the home by the street.

ONE THING A WOMAN LIKES

The man a woman likes, we both agree,
Must be the man who compliments his wife,
Who thinks enough about her dress to see
The new attachments since she wore it last,
Who tells her if the food is seasoned well,
Who recollects her wedding day with flowers,
A token that the marriage rite is yet
A vital item in his scheme of life.

Yet, even if he do these lovely things,
And fail to do the one thing needed most,
He falls below the mark she sets for man.
To be the man a woman surely likes,—
The man who has the tang of husbandhood—
He must know how to tease his wife with skill.

OUR ADOPTED CHILDREN

We count our children by the hundreds now,
And all are welcome to the home we build.
With grace and talents we would each endow,
And see in all their highest aims fulfilled,—
And if they travel well along each mile,
That's quite enough reward to make us smile.

We love these children that our hopes have borne.
Our faith will follow where their feet may roam.
We watch them climb, and, if they fail, we mourn.
However far they go they share our home,—
And if they do their best along each mile,
That's quite enough reward to make us smile.

We like to hear them sing around the fire,
Here gathered in our house beside the street,
And dream that life may crown their best desire.
Then make them leaders where success is sweet,—
And if they bless the world along each mile,
That's quite enough reward to make us smile.

IF THIS IS LOVE

To disagree with all the wills we own,
To let our hearts be stirred to deepest depths,
To feel the other's woes until it hurts,
To yearn to touch the springs of love, and fail,
To pray our love may grow no millionth less,
To dare to be ourselves, and yet at peace,
To fail to show the pure emotion felt,
To stand beside ourselves and fight for love,
To see our love mount upward with the years,
To catch the tune of love and march along,
To find love's rhythm in our marriage poem,—
If this is love and marriage,
Then love is ours, and we are married still.

APPRECIATION

The love which I would learn from you
Is more than I can tell,
For while your love is old and true,
I've just begun to spell.

This primer in the living school
I read, with you to aid,
But when I fail to know a rule
I would not lose a grade.

I learn a word or two to-day,
To-morrow I recite,
And often after school I stay
To get the lesson right.

But when I do the best I can,
O say to me, "Well done!"
For you had known when I began
I'd learn from only one.

TOGETHER

My friend is one who finds the good in me,
And bids me walk that way of life with zest;
Who looks beneath my surface acts to see
The joy I feel to heed my friend's behest.

But this is more my friend who knows my sins,
Who walks along with me with steady life;
Who holds for me a growing love, and wins
My heart through joy and sorrow, cheer and strife.

OUR CHRISTMAS HOME

The yule-log we would lay to-day,
And while the flame ascends,
Around our hearth enjoy our home,—
Then think of absent friends.

The holly wreath we'd place on high,
To crown our Christmas joy,—
But we would see that some poor child
Can have his Christmas toy.

Beneath the mistletoe we'd stand,
With love to seal our home,—
Then send our love far out to cheer
The loveless where they roam.

While gladness blossoms Christmas day,
And laughter fills the hours,
We'd send our happiness abroad,
And share our festal flowers.

THE SPICES OF LIFE

These years have gone by like a mountain breeze,
Since first we met in youth,
And started out
To really live.
The twenty-five seem brief enough,
As, glancing back, we count the tasks
We chanced to undertake.
These bits of work have never yet seemed dull,
Because, we happened then, and happen still,
To love to do them all.

Our married life has had variety,
And ever we possessed a growing interest,
In one another, or in life itself.
If separated for a space of miles or time,
We had a story when we met again,
And conversation never lagged,—
Anon we wished it had.

YOUTH

Roses red and roses white,
Blooming full and fresh,
Caught beneath the mellow light,
Straying thoughts enmesh,
While we sit beside the fire,
While we hear the summer's choir,
On this stormy winter's night.

Snow is flying through the air,
Winds are sounding loud,
Trees are groaning everywhere,
White with winter's shroud;
But, before the fire, our gaze
Penetrates beyond the haze,—
Roses! Roses blossom there!

THE FOLKS WE KNOW

We are thankful for the bounties
Which the good God has bestowed,
For the stream of golden treasures,
Which, through love, has freely flowed;
But, in truth, the best among them
Are the folks along the road.

Life is seen to be a journey,
Where the roses can be found,
Blushing with entrancing beauty,
And, although the thorns abound,
Quickly wounds from careless plucking,
Heal with friendly folks around.

With the big world in commotion,
And an earnest place to fill,
We forget the inspiration
Which the common folks instill,
Just the folks with common feelings,
Folks with friendly words and will.

So, we feel ourselves most grateful
For the gift of folks we know,
For the folks with kindred spirits,
Folks whose friendships live and grow,
Folks whose hands and hearts are ready,
Who have set our love aglow.

MISTAKES

We sat at the loom with our shuttle,
Our hands all a-tremble with fear;
The warp-threads were opened before us,
Our shuttle was never sent clear.

Our purpose was good, but our fretting
Had weakened the hands of our skill;

The threads of the cloth were entangled,
And wrought to discourage our will.

Anon we would say, "We will try it,"
Ere long we would think, "We can't win."
And thus, as the shuttle was passing,
Fair purposes turned into sin.

THRICE-TOLD TALES

I listen to hear the sweet story of old,—
In words of a beautiful child it is told,—
The story of love and of loyalty rare,
And innocent homage to motherhood fair.
I say, as I hear, there is nothing so dear,
Like Heaven above, as this story of love.

I listen again to a lover's first tale,
As, feeling his loyalty never can fail,
He uses a torrent of words, and re-states
That love is a furnace that never abates.
I say, as I hear, there is nothing so dear,—
If brief, or if long, 'tis a beautiful song.

I listen once more to the song of a man
Who sings the fair story of love once again.
To him 'tis as old as the hills, and as sweet
As when it was found in the Garden's retreat.
I say, as I hear, there is nothing so dear,—
'Tis love, be it told by the young or the old.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

A woman I know wears a garment
Composed of warm air and thin paste,
I know of a man in that household,
Preparing his toilet in haste.
The woman I know, smiling softly,
And holding both hands at her waist,
Says sweetly, "Please button this garment."
They tell me that woman has taste!

The man that I know has a temper,—
Too frequently dressed for parade.
That woman is guilty of sinning,—
She ordered her dress to be made
With buttons behind and around her.
In English both decent and staid,
The man just replies, "I will do it."
The man is a saint, I'm afraid!

SOLID COMFORT

In a tense and snowy winter,
When the storm is growing fierce,
When the frost is on the windows,
And your clothes the keen winds pierce;
When you feel the bony fingers
Of the ice along the gate,

You can find life very pleasant
If you sit before the grate.

Let the winds of howling nature
Play their tunes among the trees,
They possess Æolian sweetness
Far beyond the Grecian breeze;
For the music of the winter,
As the hour is growing late,
Finds your dreaming heart responsive,
Where you sit before the grate.

All the cares of day are over,
Work and strain are now forgot,
Though of life's depressing burdens
You have had your common lot;
But you feel a pure contentment,
As this hour you dedicate,
Free from storm, and toil, and fretting,
As you sit before the grate.

What a happiness in home-ties,
When the children say, "Good-night!"
Toss you kisses from the stairway,
Wave their hands with all their might!
Could you ask the gentle fairies
To bestow a sweeter fate
Than to give you home and comfort,
As you sit before the grate!

Later on, the children sleeping,
She who loves you comes again,
Reads aloud a pleasing story,
She, the complement of man,—
Then you guess no seventh heaven
Could contain a better state,
Than the joy of love and loving,
As you sit before the grate.

III
When the World Calls

WHEN THE WORLD CALLS

Somewhere among the crowds somebody called.
The sound was heard above the city's din.
That haunting voice filled all our days with
thought,
Since few had heeded when somebody called.

We worked in peace where life was strong and
sweet.
Our little garden blossomed bright with love.
Our sleep was pure repose and restful dreams,
Yet, even there, we heard somebody call.

The voice was clear, and sad, and strangely old.
Life's woes and pains re-echoed in that call.
We worked among our blossoms, still content,—
When out in life somebody called again.

We sought each other's eyes, then glanced away,
And worked with fevered wills among our
flowers;
But much of peace was lost in work or love,—
For ever we could hear somebody call.

One day we thought to heed somebody's call,
And once,—just once—to share our buds of love.
Then peace crept back to dwell where fear had
stalked,—
Because somebody brought us love and—poise.

SOMEWHERE

There's a call to us from somewhere
For our hearts imbued with doubt,
Held by winter's clinging fingers,
Bidding us to venture out,
Into somewhere.

We can taste the wines of somewhere
From the springs beneath the trees,
And inhale the mingled odors
On the fragrant scented breeze;
We can hear sublimest music,
See the earth's entrancing plays,
Feel the lips of buoyant zephyrs
Kiss our thoughts in myriad ways,
In the somewhere.

O, the gentle voice of somewhere
Calls away from discontent,
To the fields, the woods, the rivers,
With our hearts on gladness bent,
Into somewhere.

COMPENSATION

We love to dare to do the foolish things,
To lie and dream beneath the spreading trees,
And watch the waving flowers and searching
bees.
We love the low-toned brook that never brings
A discord as it romps along and sings.
We love to loaf, and dream, and be at ease,
And sense the magic music in each breeze.
Our dreams are sweeter than the reign of
Kings.

The world may speak again with pleading tone,
But gladly we go back, and leave our dreams.
Our duty calls us there in plaintive words,
But blithely we obey,—nor we alone,—
For others labor where the world's light
gleams.
We go, and still we hear the songs of birds.

THE PRICE OF HAPPINESS

Our years might drag along with lagging gait,
And find us weary, waiting for the end.
Each morning we might long for night to send
Its rest, and night might come again too late.

Life might bestow on us a restless fate,—
And all because we hoped to try to bend
Our bodies for another's load, or lend
Our strength to guard some widely swinging gate.

But we accept no rest for weary feet,
If we, at ease, must sing our little part,
And cease to care that earth should lose its rhyme.
We much prefer the bitter with the sweet,
That we may soothe the world's unhappy heart.
The bush is bruised to yield its oil of thyme.

SCRAPS

A scrap of old paper,
A bit of a thought,
Some scribbling, erasing,
A poem is wrought;
But who of the wisest
Can measure the power
Of such idle thinking
For some evil hour?

A flower blowing idly,
A man passing by,
A thought of the absent,
A heart-hungry cry;
But who of the greatest
Can measure the deed
Of such kindly thinking
For some one in need?

A pen on the table,
The ink waiting near,
A thought of a loved one,
With many a fear;
But who of the noblest
Can measure the light
From such loving thinking,
Like stars in the night?

How small seem most of the things to which the world calls many of us! And yet the greatest joy-moments our lives have known have been brought by a smile, a word, or even a tear. When we have drooped under the burden of the mountain of little oughts and musts our heads have lifted and our hearts have rung with happiness over the tiniest bit of keen appreciation.

IF WE COULD WHISTLE

As a boy is going homeward,
When the sun has said, "Good-night!"
Just before the stars are shining,
When the road is scarce in sight;
When the woods seem thickly peopled,
And a second drags like years,
He will whistle through the darkness,
Just to down his mounting fears.

When life's owls had joined in hooting,
Sending down our backs the chills;
When the silence fell upon us,
Rousing weird and ghostly thrills;
When the prancing, dancing phantoms
Chased each other here and there,
We have found if we could whistle,
Then we might not seem to care.

When upon life's homeward journey
Shadows fell across our way;
When the seeming dangers threatened,
When 'twas neither night nor day;
When the hours with fears were freighted,
When the road was scarcely plain,
We have found, if we could whistle,
Whistling was not always vain.

So,—sometimes—we whistled loudly,
Made the world with music ring,
Never minded what we whistled!
Whistled! whistled anything!
When we tried to whistle grandly
Half our dangers disappeared,
And we found if we could whistle,
Phantoms vanished we had feared.

IF WE DARE

We have known those restless longings
  For a service undefined.
We have felt the pulsing cravings
  To escape the zestless grind.
But one star ascends the skies
  Unobserved by common eyes.

We receive but tasteless pleasure
  From the banquet of an hour.
From the ecstasy of passion
  We obtain no lasting dower.
All the augurs indicate
  We must share the common fate.

If we dare, our restless cravings
  Urge our feet across the fields,
By the common star of guidance,
  Where the soil of service yields
More abundant fruitage still
  Than rewards the common will.

If we dare! We dare the journey
  Through the scorn of vaunting foes.
Dare! We dare the common duties
  In a world of common woes.
Lo! We dare to grasp the prize
  Undiscerned by common eyes.

THE WAR ON WORRY

Defeat has ranged his guns against our will,
And marshaled all the force within his powers.
His gunners, trained for long, decisive hours,
Destroy our plans with unrelenting skill.
His drastic rain of fire and shell will kill
Our fondest hopes, and blight our rarest flowers.
As victor of depressing days, he towers
Above our wreckage, vengeful, boastful still.

But dying hope yet says a fervent prayer,
And bids us rise to make another stand.
With scarce surviving faith, our spirits bear
Their broken arms and hold the captured land.
Defeat goes down! We sing the victor's song!
Our souls have won the fight against the strong.

GOD OF THE COMMON THINGS

We love the flow of quiet waters,
The rugged grandeur of the hills,
The waving trees with glowing blossoms,
The thrilling songs of active rills;
And with our thoughts inspired by nature,
We feel we rise to know our God,
As none on earth can ever know Him,
Who never walks with nature's rod.

We love the city's busy motion,
The rushing crowds with yearning hearts,
The little children's eager faces,
The pulsing throb of active marts;
And with our lives inspired by action,
A heaven on earth we know we find,
Which none with idle hands discovers,
And none achieves with idle mind.

We love the people all around us,
The common songs our neighbors sing,
The common skies which arch above us,
The thoughts which common friendships bring;
And with our hearts absorbed in loving
The common things we find around,
We see God's kingdom instituted,
Where folks and common things abound.

IF WE COULD

We would be no trouble-makers,
Driving people with our goads.
We would be no gossip-venders,
Peddling wares along all roads.
We would seek the peace of others,
We would hail the world as brothers,
We would help to lift their loads,—
If we could!

Pure in heart, and loving mercy,
Modest-mannered we would go.
Loving much our fellow pilgrims,
Tender motives we would show.
Where contentious crowds are thronging,
With serene and friendly longing,
We would trust and peace bestow,—
If we could!

THINGS WE MIGHT HAVE DONE

Ghosts appear at glaring noonday,
Staring, fuming, smirking, lank,
Dressed in filmy, dull apparel,
Apparitions, moldy, dank,—
Ghosts compelling recognition,
Bowing, cringing, foreign things;
Ghosts with roaring, raucous voices,
Ghosts to which the grave-smell clings,—
Ghosts of what we might have done.

Ghosts of youthful ebullition,
Grinning, dancing, folly-wise,
Stretching forward stilted fingers,
Gazing with accusing eyes,—
Ghosts that make us shrink, and falter,
When they play their ghastly games,—
For these witless apparitions,
Loudly cry their owners' names,—
Ghosts of what we might have done.

THE VICTORY OF PEACE

The darkness gathers full around us,
The day has faded from our view.
The flowers we plucked lie loose and withered,
We feel the power of night anew.

We dare command our feeble courage
To raise our thoughts beyond the soil,
Where life may rise above the quibbling,
Beyond the faithless hopes and toil.

We reach forth nervous hands of longing,
To grasp the fleeting vision's form,
But, even though our hope has lingered,
Our faith falls, bruised, amid the storm.

Again we raise our faith, and daring,
We bid it stand erect and strong.
We bid our courage calm our passion,
And teach our hearts the victor's song.

OUR HOUSE ON THE SHORE

We build our little house upon the beach
From sands washed from the shores of distant
lands.
We place the empty shells among the sands,

To deck the house as far as they will reach.
Then sand-made chimneys tumble down, and
teach
That even this, the smallest task, demands
The patient effort of our skillful hands.
We build our house of changing sands, to preach
A sermon for our hearts: that from far shores
We bring a wealth of love to decorate
This life we build; and if its sands begin
To fall, still patient, we shall seek the stores
Of stronger faith, to build again; and fate
Shall never daunt our puissant will to win.

TRUST

Blow, winds, across the winter snows!
What harm can reach the heart which grows
More warm with each succeeding year!
The heart of faith has naught to fear.

IV
Playing Together

PLAYING TOGETHER

Hard work, and many tasks ahead to do,
Work done with speed, and thoroughly
performed,
And humor sprinkled over all the work,
And then a bit of fun, and work again,—
That makes our work take on the zest of play.

There were days of recreation when we tried to say "Good-by" for a time to our work,—when we wandered forth to see and hear some secrets of the Out-of-Doors. We lived and ate and slept and played close to the dear big heart of Mother Nature—only to find that, even in our play-times, we were doing lessons still. The turning of a stone might mean more than a sermon. The smell of the pines had its messages, as did the song of the mountain brook, in its ceaseless going on.

ALONG THE ROAD

Life has all around us, dearest,
That to make our spirits glad.
Let's lift up our broken courage,
And decline to be so sad.

Fields of good are blooming, dearest,
Far beyond our journey's way,
And their fragrance, borne by breezes,
Bathes our senses all the day.

Flowers are growing by the roadside
Ready for our eager hands,
Flowers of human kindness, dearest,
Which our craving hope demands.

All along the road is beauty,
Life is sweeter than we know,—
Let's lift up our courage, dearest,
Pluck the roses as we go.

JUST AS WELL LAUGH

We can never gain by moping
When there's need for cheer and hoping,
Though the days have lost their sun;
Clouds may banish pleasant weather,
But if wise we laugh together,
When by laughing much is won.

Some will rise to tell us early,
Smileless, cheerless, sad, and surly,
That misfortunes must ensue;
But we'll keep a cheerful vision,
Holding hard to hope's decision,
And, while laughing, fight it through.

If the pessimistic creatures
Add the dire and gloomy features
With their large and long displays;
Still, despite their sad haranguing,
Loud descanting, booming, banging,
We will laugh through cheerless days.

We will laugh until to-morrow,
We will smile through pain or sorrow,
We will laugh along our way;
We will laugh when earth is cheerful,
We will smile when life is tearful;
We will smile or laugh to-day.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

When we catch the precious fragrance
From the varied scented flowers,
When we feel the balmy breezes
In the summer's choicest hours;
When we see this world of beauty
Which the good God made for us,

Just a whole earth full of beauty,
Do you think we ought to fuss?

When we know the love and friendships,
Which uplift us with the hands
Of a thousand choicest spirits,—
Such a love as understands;
When we see the hope and courage
Of the friends surrounding us,
Just a big world full of friendships,
Do you think we ought to fuss?

When we get a lot of comfort,
From the books we like to read,
From the works of pleasant writers,
Who, through sorrows, know our need,
When we breathe the wholesome culture
Of these thoughts prepared for us,
Just a book-world full of pleasures,
Do you think we ought to fuss?

O, the world is full of beauty!
O, there's joy on every tree!
Earth is simply running over
With the cheer which wants to be!
All creation sings with gladness
In the song of life to us,
Just a big world full of gladness,
Do you think we ought to fuss?

MUSIC

When we feel the deep depression
Of our life's most dreadful day;
When our hearts are full of sorrow,
When the thorns obstruct the way;

When the joy of hope has left us,
When our sun of life goes down,
When dull morning dawns upon us,
And near faces wear a frown.

Let us hear the blessed music
Which old Earth is sending out!
It will soothe us, it will calm us,
It will make us face about.

For the earth is singing, singing!
Loud hosannas fill the air!
O, the music is celestial,
Driving forth our dullest care!

Let the music of the children,
Let the winds among the pines,
Let the songsters of the woodlands,
Thrill our hearts like tonic wines.

THE PATH ACROSS THE LAKE

The sun had failed to shine through all the day,
And summer pleasure-seekers watched the rain
Fall on the water of the lake, or gain
A resting place in the cup-like leaves, or play
Against the foliage of underbrush,
Or heard but softened murmurs of the thrush.

The storm-clouds hung above the surging waves,
And seemed to vie, now and again, in long
And bitter battle, moving off with the song
Of victory in the air, the valiant braves
Emitting shouts as the thunder spent its sound
Among the hills, and ceased at the camping
ground.

But when the evening hour arrived, the sun
Dispersed the scudding clouds, which theretofore
Had held majestic sway, and at the door
Of night, smiled forth its joy that cheer had won
The final battle; through the dark and gloom
To warring clouds it spoke the words of doom.

Through falling rain, as through the present tears
Of some short day of life, the sun shone
Against the surface of the lake, and wan
And troubled waters lost their mounting fears

And glistened in the light to form a path,
Where drooping hopes could walk through conquered wrath.

A path to splendid suns of hope and cheer
Awaits the patient seeker of the sure,
Eternal good, awarded to the pure
Of soul; through wretched pain, and doubt, and fear,
The eye of hope will yet behold the sun
Across the lake, before the day is done.

When a day's end brought us to a trysting-rock, to watch the sun in its going away leave its golden glory-path across the lake,—like tired children weary with our play, we would have followed our friend, the sun, to his journey's end, but when night pulled the path away from us, and the tender time of the glory fading from the gray was over, we turned away to our rest-time, to be ready, like the sun, for yet another day's going on. Then it was that one of us loved to wander on out into the darkness—alone—never failing to find for himself and others strength and helpfulness from the noises of the still night.

OUR QUEST

We lie beside the northern lake and think;
We wonder what its secret depths contain.
The breezes stir its surface like the rain,
And still we lie and ponder near the brink.
We see the beautiful gray clouds sink
To touch the hills just back of Lovers' Lane.
The sun comes speeding down the race to gain.
The sky paints high its white and gold and pink.

We look at life and see the changes there,
We watch its fleecy clouds, and feel its air,—
Its winds blow gently, swiftly, then a gale.
We search its secrets out, and, if we fail,
We sense its beauty in the magic whole,
We find its body, and we touch its soul.

V
Wishing Together

A LITTLE WISH

A little wish, and nothing more.
If wishes from the heart arise,
They cheer the ignorant, or wise.
And wishes we may keep in store
For poor and rich, and high and low;
So, wishes from our hearts may go
To bless our friends from shore to shore.

A little wish, a cheering song.
And eager souls, there are, who pray
For love and wishes every day—
A little wish will help along.
So, we will send it forth, and bless
All friends who wait in hopelessness,
One wish may right a fancied wrong.

A little wish may change their views.
A single wish, "God bless you, dear!"
May strengthen faith, and quiet fear.
One little wish, with brighter hues,
May gild a world where some one frets.
A little wish, with no regrets,
'Most any day, a friend can use.

STILL BUILDING CASTLES

When the winter's cold is over,
And we shun the summer's suns,
When the days are growing longest,
And we court the coolest ones,
In the shadow of the twilight,
When the stars begin to gleam,
What a joy in building castles,
Though we build them in a dream!

Dreams are things, the sages tell us,
In their philosophic strain,
Stubborn facts, and like statistics
Mold the self-indulging brain.
Let Athenian scholars worry,
Write their essays by the ream,—
We continue building castles,
Though we build them in a dream.

Building castles, airy castles!
Building close beside the sea,
Where the sunbeams kiss the faces
Of the mermaids wild and free!
Building where the fragrant breezes
Through the open windows stream!
We continue building castles,
Though we build them in a dream.

THE THOUGHTLESS CROWD

The thoughtless crowd would reach the golden
gleam
Of passing joys with over-eager hands;
Its passion, never satisfied, demands
The gilded tinsel of a reckless dream.
The crowd, in striving for the things which seem
To be of fleeting worth, neglects the lands
Of certain good, to roam the futile sands
Of desert heat, or breast a needless stream.

O thoughtless crowd, unclasp those fading
flowers,
And cease to strive to gain the gleams of light,
And those alone, abiding but a day!
For life is more than swiftly passing hours;
Its good endures beyond a day and night;
Its faith will cherish God's eternal way.

STUMBLERS

Mercy, Lord, upon Thy children,
Weak and striving.
Pity, Lord, our many failures,
Strength-depriving.

When we promised better service,
Consecrated,—
Then we stumbled as we promised,
Deeds belated.

Now we find in Thee a refuge
For our weakness.
Pardon, Lord, our lack of courage,
Give us meekness.

Grant us love and conscious guidance,
Power unceasing.
Give us strength in all temptations,
Sins decreasing.

WE WANT THE BEST

The eagle is the creature of the heights.
He draws the gauzy curtain of his eye,
And spreads his wings to touch the very sky.
Upon his body play a million lights.
All lesser strength his magic skill affrights.
The busy marts beneath his vision lie,
His lofty spirit heeds no sordid cry.
Just fledglings never reach his towering flights.

So we would cause our faith to spread its wings,
And rise above the sordidness of life.
In pledging troth, our hearts would dwell where sings
The sweet-toned wind of peace,—above all strife.
Our hopes would bear us on to purest light.
We pray our love may live in all its might.

GOD BLESS YOU

We've heard the sweetest songs of mirth,
But nothing men can sing you,
Bestows a courage here on earth
Like blessings God can bring you.

God bless you at the rising sun.
That wish, when doubts oppress you,
May prove, before the day is done,
The very charm to bless you.

When tempted, may you hear the phrase,
The strongest ever spoken,
"God bless you!" and the evil maze
Be threaded with the token.

Remember, friends, our faith is bold—
For you we're ever praying,
And, though your nights be dark and cold,
Our prayers are never straying.

For love is love, and friends are friends,
Though life may have its sorrow,
And friends can know love never ends
With distance, nor to-morrow.

So we can wish no more to-day
Than God's all-loving, "Bless you."
God bless you, friends, in all your way,
And God's own hope possess you.

Then once again we say, dear friends,
"God keep and ever bless you!"
And once again we pray, dear friends,
"May never storms distress you!"

DREAMING AND WAKING

With important tasks of service
Set aside for one more day,
With the routine cares forgotten,
Or, remembered, laid away,
We can settle down to dreaming,
Just to dreaming, nothing more,—
Dreaming, dreaming, just to dreaming
Of our gifts of love in store.

There are friends, again remembered,
From the scenes of long ago.
One by one they pass before us,
Ancient friends we scarcely know.
We were pledged to mutual liking,
By the chance of meeting thrice,
So we think of them, when dreaming,—
Dreaming is no sacrifice.

Friends, there are, of youthful fancy,
Boys and girls from all the ranks.
Laughter bubbles through our dreaming,—
We remember idle pranks.

Laughing, dreaming, dreaming, laughing,
Folks imagine something wrong,
But if they will go a-dreaming,
They could hear life's laughing song.

Then, from dreaming we awaken
To behold our friends around,
Friends of youth, and friends in service,
Friends whose faithful deeds abound.
Though, full pleasant was our dreaming,
We awake to better things,—
Friends and friendships still possessing,
Songs abiding friendship sings.

WHEN WE GROW OLD

When we grow old and know those years
Have come to lay aside the aims
That we have kept through smiles or tears,
And sought to give high-sounding names,
We would eschew the mournful rôle,
And take our lot with mellowed mind.
We would accept life's proffered dole,
And realize the world is kind.

When we grow old and know our fate,
And feel our flesh is getting weak,
When many gifts of mind abate,
And earth might seem to some a bleak

And lonely place to live and hope,
We want to find the strength to smile,
And dare with ancient age to cope,—
And blithely travel one more mile.

When we grow old we want to feel
Our friends are very good to see.
In cheerfulness we ask to kneel
And render thanks that we could be
Such hopeful pilgrims through this life.
Then when we hear the final call,
We want to lay aside the strife,
As though we loved it,—pain and all.

SEMPER FIDELIS

We watch beyond our cross a star.
Its mellow beams are seen afar,
Because, indeed, our faith is weak.
We go, as those whose hope is found,
And travel on, the world around,—
Since we may find, if we will seek.

And we can find, since we can go
On sea and plain, through flood and snow
To do our work and pay the price.
Our courage writes the lesson plain,
That we must go through woe and pain,
And bear our cross of sacrifice.

If blithely we can bear our cross,
And smile, although our pain is loss,—
Since present loss is future gain,—
If we can smile through mists of tears,
And bear glad burdens through the years,
We'll see our bow of hope through rain.

If we can go from east to west,
With gifts of myrrh and gold the best
And find God's holy trysting place,
And pledge our faith, and homage pay,
And lift our cross and go our way,
Then lo! within our hearts Christ's face!

If we can live beside our street,
And keep our hearts serenely sweet,
If we can wear these bands of gold,
And thoughtful—ever faithful—be,
Our love is young—we both agree—
Until Christ's Star shines gray and cold.

GOD BLESS US BOTH

That we can live in one accord is blessing rare.
That we possess our secret likes, and share
Our mutual thoughts is worth the price of gold.
The sweet exchange of words is wealth untold.

We bow our hearts, and through our common
prayers
Our lives are blessed, because the Father cares.
He gently leads, as her child a mother leads,
Through play and laughter, work and needs.

So thus, as lovers bow before the throne
Of God together,—we would bow alone,
And hand in hand, with lasting love, would pray,
"God bless us both, and keep us all the way."

God bless us both, and hold the future true,
Anoint us with his holy oil, or rue.
If pain must come,—we know it surely will,—
God give us hope and make us cheerful still.

God bless us both, and train our love to grow
Along His trellis, though His grace be slow.
In time enough that mounting vine will bear
The flowers of peace, and joy, and tender care.

THE END

Printed in the United States of America

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Oct. 2009

PreservationTechnologies
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